

**For immediate release
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ICE SKATING SEASON ENDS AT STATE PARKS

Effective Thursday, March 1, ice skating will no longer be allowed on the designated ponds and lakes in Massachusetts state parks and forests. Ice skating will continue, however, at the more than three dozen indoor rinks owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

In winter, DCR provides ice skating opportunities at five outdoor locations across the state when conditions permit. (See list below.) As spring approaches, however, and temperatures rise, the ice is no longer considered safe. (Generally speaking, according to Bob Grahm, waterfront program coordinator for DCR, in order for ice to be safe, air temperature should be below freezing for five consecutive days.) During the skating season, conditions at these five designated facilities are monitored daily, and 6 inches of solid ice is required to consider the area safe for skating.

At this time of year, ice is extremely unreliable, and ice safety on all bodies of water is a serious concern. DCR officials recommend that all users - skaters, walkers, ice fishermen, snowmobilers, etc. - stay off the ice at all state parks and forests, and indeed, at all bodies of water in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency offers these safety tips:

1. Never go onto the ice alone. A friend may be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through the ice.
2. Always keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice, do not attempt a rescue. Go for help.
3. Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it strong, but it also can insulate the ice and keep it from freezing. Snow also can hide cracks as well as weak and open ice.
4. Ice formed over flowing water (including springs under the surface) is generally weaker than ice over still water.
5. Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be 1 foot thick in one spot, and be only 1 inch thick 10 feet away.

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6. If a companion falls through the ice and you are unable to reach that person from shore, throw something to them (a rope, tree branch, even jumper cables, etc.). If this doesn't work, go or phone for help before you also become a victim. Get medical assistance for the victim immediately.

7. If you fall in, try not to panic. Turn toward the direction you came from. Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface, working forward by kicking your feet. Once the ice is solid enough to hold you, and you can pull yourself out, remain lying on the ice (do not stand - lying down spreads your weight across a wider area, lessening the weight on any one spot) and roll away from the hole. Crawl back the way you came, keeping your weight distributed, until you return to solid ice.

The state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife offers additional ice safety tips at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfwice.htm.

The safest place to skate, of course, is an indoor rink. To find a rink near you, visit www.mass.gov/dcr/ and click on "rink locations." Closing dates for individual rinks are also listed there.

For information on other winter recreation opportunities in the Massachusetts state parks, visit DCR's website at www.massparks.org.

Also, for future reference, these state parks and forests provide outdoor skating in season: Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, Uxbridge; D.A.R. State Forest, Goshen; Dunn Pond State Park, Gardner; Mt. Tom State Reservation, Holyoke; Wendell State Forest, Wendell.

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